

## DAYTON DAILY NEWS

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Jeffrey remembers how his father, who died 20 years ago, was surprised by the photo shoot. As a Polish citizen of Jewish faith, he had fought in his hometown as a partisan against the Germans until the Soviets swept through.

The war had been going on for Europeans for six years, and the U.S. forces had been fighting for four. War correspondents like those following the 69th Division were constantly on the lookout for stories and photos to give hope to their readers back home that the war might soon be over.

As the U.S. forces advanced into Germany from the west, Soviet forces pushed from the East.

For two days in late April, 1945, American patrols had been watching out for the Red Army between the rivers Mulde and Elbe. The rising number of oncoming German refugees, trying to reach the area captured by the American Forces, and the thunderous cannonade of artillery bore witness to their speedy arrival.

On April 25 1945, several encounters along the river Elbe between the cities of Torgau and Riesa took place between members of the American 69th Infantry Division and the 58th Guards Division of 1st Ukrainian Front of the Red Army.

Stunned relief characterized the encounter in the blossom-scented air on that flourishing spring day. For both of Germany's opponents it was not only visible but also palpable proof that the war could not go on much longer: it was already possible to shake the other's hand.

Joy spread out followed by curiosity about the legendary "comrade in arms:" the Red Army with its female soldiers adorned with skirts and guns, and the better-equipped American GIs.

"Spirit of the Elbe"

The Americans, who had started in Normandy, had fought their way forward through France and the German Reich and had seized the cities of Kassel and Leipzig during their advance. They were now linked with units from the Red Army, who had pursued the German armed forces along its way since Stalingrad.

The allies could not have been more diverse, since the ideological contrasts and the mutual propaganda had fed the fires of stereotyped prejudices and deep-rooted suspicion both among the ranks of the commanders and the ranks of the infantry.

However, Thau's memories, combat narratives and pictures of that time portray laughing soldiers sitting on jeeps, comradely embraces, happily posed photos in front of flags.

"The Americans and the Soviets were still a little bit uneasy when they first met," Jeffrey Thau said. "That soon relaxed when they started exchanging vodka for some of the chocolate bars the us military used to carry. It became sort of a party like atmosphere."

Lieutenant Thau remembered those moments fondly. He told his son later that he and his comrades had to roll their daily tobacco rations in rouble bills from their pay, assuming that they